CHAPTER I

The Mahāyāna and the Middle Period in Indian Buddhism

Through a Chinese Looking-Glass

In spite of the fact that according to most periodizations, and in most current handbooks, the Middle Period of Indian Buddhism is presented as the period of the Mahāyāna, it is becoming increasingly obvious that there is little evidence to support this. Certainly this period—from the beginning of the Common Era to the fifth/sixth centuries—saw the production of a substantial body of Mahāyāna *sūtras*, but this production can no longer be viewed in isolation. The Middle Period in India saw a very great deal more as well, and the bulk of this has no demonstrable connection with the Mahāyāna. As we look for the reasons that this other material has been ignored or marginalized and try to explain how the Mahāyāna may have been assigned a place in the history of Indian Buddhism that it does not deserve, at least one thing is becoming clearer: the history of the Mahāyāna in China may well have been the single most powerful determining force in how the history of the Mahāyāna in India was perceived and reconstructed.

Seen from almost any point of view, things Chinese have played a surprisingly large part in the study of Indian Buddhism. Chinese translations of Buddhist texts have, for example, often been used—rightly or wrongly—to [2]* establish chronological relationships among Indian texts, and the date of a translation, when determinable, at least allows us to know that some version of the Indian text had already been in existence for some indeterminable amount of time. There are, of course, important cases where the information so derived appears to be of little consequence, and one thinks here above all else of the various *vinayas*; all but one of the *vinayas* preserved in Chinese were translated in the early fifth century, but most scholars

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have wanted to say that the Indian "originals" had been composed centuries before. If these scholars are correct, it is not at all clear what the dates of the Chinese translations really tell us. Instances of this sort should give us pause for thought.

Chinese translations have also been used—less successfully, I think—to try to track what have been seen as developments within a given Indian text. The nature and number of assumptions and methodological problems involved in such a use have not, however, always or ever been fully faced, and it is not impossible that some—if not a great deal—of what has been said on the basis of Chinese translations about the history of an Indian text has more to do with the history of Chinese translation techniques and Chinese religious or cultural predilections than with the history of the Indian text itself.

The role of Chinese translations in the histories of Indian Buddhist literature is, of course, well known. Less well known perhaps is the impact of Chinese sources on other aspects of the study of Buddhism in India: the study of the historical geography of India and the archaeology of Buddhist India were both virtually founded on the basis of Chinese sources. Without Fa-hsien and Hsüan-tsang it is hard to imagine where either of these disciplines would be today. Without access to the Chinese "travel" literature, Alexander Cunningham, who put both disciplines on their first footing, would surely not have accomplished what he did, and many major Buddhist sites would almost certainly have remained unidentified. Fa-hsien and Hsüan-tsang provided him with the basic maps.[1]

In these and other ways Chinese sources have made foundational, and largely positive, contributions to the study of Indian Buddhism. But there are [3] other cases where they have proved less useful, where knowledge of things Chinese may have been more of an obstacle than an aid to understanding the historical situation in India. It is, for example, virtually certain that early and repeated assertions that an emphasis on filial piety was peculiar to Chinese Buddhism—that it was, in fact, one of the "transformations" of Buddhism in China—seriously retarded the recognition of the importance of filial piety in Buddhist India.[2] It is almost equally certain that the documented importance of Amitābha and Sukhāvatī in China has led to a good deal of fruitless effort directed toward finding an organized "Pure Land" Buddhism in India.[3]

But beyond specifics of this sort lurk some far broader and perhaps even more general concerns. It has often been unthinkingly assumed that developments in China kept pace with and, with some lead time, chronologically paralleled developments in India—that is, that the two somehow developed in tandem. There were at least two effects of this kind of assumption: (1) very little attention has been paid to chronologically disarticulated developments in the two spheres, and (2) there has been little willingness to concede even the possibility that certain developments in Buddhist forms and institutions may have occurred first in China,

perhaps centuries before something similar occurred in India. Let me first cite an example that might illustrate something of both.

There seems to be little doubt that the Perfection of Wisdom literature—the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā*, the *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā*, etc.—was in China, as Professor Zürcher says, "of paramount importance" in the late third and early fourth centuries, when Buddhism "began to penetrate into the life and thought of the cultured upper classes."[4] An Indianist must be struck by several things here. The first, of course, is that there is virtually no evidence that this literature, and particularly the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā,* ever penetrated "into the life and thought of the cultured upper classes" in India, let alone that it did so in the third and fourth centuries. The cultured upper classes in India, in fact, seem to have seen Buddhist monks and nuns largely as buffoons, their stock [4] character in classical Indian literature and drama.[5] Moreover, the rare Buddhist authors who could write classical *kāvya* or poetry—Aśvaghoṣa, Āryaśūra—show little awareness and no particular influence of texts like the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā.* Even in Indian *śāstric* works, where one might expect it, Perfection of Wisdom texts are rarely cited. Candrakīrti in his *Prasannapadā,* for example, cites the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā* only four times, but the *Samādhirāja-sūtra* more than twenty; in his *Śikṣāsamuccaya* Śāntideva cites the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā* only twice, but the *Samādhirāja-sūtra,* again, almost twenty times. The insignificance of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā* and related texts in India until rather late may also be reflected in the Central Asian manuscript collections. Although Perfection of Wisdom texts are not themselves overly common in these collections, when they do occur they are overwhelmingly, if not all, fragments from so-called "Larger" Perfection of Wisdoms—that in 18,000, 25,000, or 100,000 lines. The same holds true for the Gilgit manuscripts.[6]

This is not to say that there is no evidence for the "popularity" of the Perfection of Wisdom and the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā* in India. There is such evidence, but it does not come from the third or fourth centuries, but rather from the Pāla Period, and predominantly from the Late Pāla Period—that is to say, from the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Then, and only then, do we have any evidence that this literature was even known outside a tiny circle of Buddhist scholastics. At Sārnāth, for example, we have an eleventh-century inscription that records the fact that a "most excellent lay-sister who was a follower of the Mahāyāna" had had the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā* copied and had made a gift to ensure "the recitation of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikāprajñā* for as long a time as the moon, the sun and the earth will endure."[7] At Nālandā too there is an eleventh-century inscription that records the religious activity of a prominent monk, probably an "Abbot." This monk's teacher is described as having "in his heart . . . 'the [5] Mother of the Buddhas' in eight thousand (verses)," and the monk himself is said to have made what appears to have been a revolving bookcase "by means of which the Mother of the Buddhas revolved continually in the great temple of the Holy Khasarppaṇa (Avalokiteśvara)."[8] To these epigraphical records testifying to the importance

of the Perfection of Wisdom in Pāla Period Northeast India can be added the colophons of more than a dozen palm-leaf manuscripts, which prove that the act of the "excellent lay-sister" at Sārnāth was by no means an isolated instance. These manuscripts were copied at several major monasteries in Bengal and Bihar—at Nālandā certainly, at Vikramaśīla, and possibly at Kurkihar. These manuscripts were the "religious gifts" (*deyadharma*) of a significant number of Mahāyāna lay sisters and brothers and some Mahāyāna monks.[9] They were copied—exactly as the content of the text would suggest—as an act of merit, and the resulting merit was assigned or "transferred" with exactly the same donative formulae used in the earliest Mahāyāna inscriptions, which date to the fifth century. Many of these manuscripts, moreover, had functioned as objects of worship: their covering boards or first leaves were often heavily stained and encrusted from continuous daubing with unguents and aromatic powders.[10]

All of this, in short, testifies to the kind of book cult that, for example, the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā* itself describes and that one might therefore have expected at the time of its composition at, perhaps, the beginning of the Common Era. But this evidence is almost a thousand years later than it should be, and before this there is no actual evidence outside of literary sources for what the text describes.

There appear to be at least two points here worth pondering. First, it would appear that the date of composition of a text need not have any direct connection with the period, or periods, of its religious or cultural significance: [6] ideas and practices in a text may only have been actualized centuries after that text was composed. Second, the apparent periods of popularity of the Perfection of Wisdom in India and China are radically unaligned and its popularity in each is of a very different kind: the Indian situation, it would appear, need not have any predictive value for the Chinese, nor the Chinese for the Indian.

This example of the Perfection of Wisdom may appear extreme, but the case of the *vinayas* already cited may be very like it. If, again, the *vinayas* are as old as most scholars would have them be, then fully ordered monasticism in India and China are separated once more by almost a thousand years. There is as well other material concerning the Perfection of Wisdom that points to a significant—if not quite so radical—nonalignment between situations in India and China.

If we want to look more synchronically at the situation of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā* or the Perfection of Wisdom "school" in third-century China and in third-century India, the first thing that becomes obvious is that our sources are, to be sure, more than a little uneven. For China we may refer again to the material so carefully studied by Professor Zürcher and repeat his remarks about the "paramount importance" of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā* and the Perfection of Wisdom in what he calls, "not without hesitation," the "gentry Buddhism" of the period in China. For India we have nothing like the richness of his sources, but we do have an important historical source probably

from this same period that has been oddly overlooked, a source that, while not directly linkable to the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā*, appears to have been authored by the major scholastic that Buddhist traditions want to associate with Perfection of Wisdom literature.

Probably most of the scholars who are supposed to know about such things agree that the *Ratnāvalī* is an authentic work of Nāgārjuna and that Nāgārjuna probably lived in the second or third century C.E.[11] If both things are true, the *Ratnāvalī* is of interest not just to students of Buddhist philosophy, [7] but is also an important document for the historian of the Mahāyāna since it presents what it explicitly labels as a "contemporary" characterization of the movement. Chapter IV in fact devotes a good deal of space to the Mahāyāna and in several verses describes what appears to have been the general response to it. In one verse, however, the author uses a small but significant word that may chronologically anchor the entire account. The word is *adya*—"now," "today" (IV.79). Again, if Nāgārjuna is the author of the *Ratnāvalī* and if he lived in the second or third century, then the "now" obviously refers to this same period. So although we still cannot geographically situate the account and although we still do not know if it refers to the Mahāyāna as a whole or only to the Mahāyāna in a certain area, we can for now at least locate it in time: it refers to the Mahāyāna in the second or third century, or to the Mahāyāna at least one century—and perhaps more—after the first Mahāyāna *sūtras* were written.

Although the *Ratnāvalī* is describing the Mahāyāna after it had had a century or more to develop and take shape, there is no indication in the text that this Mahāyāna had even yet successfully effected anything like what Stcherbatsky called the "radical revolution [that] had transformed the Buddhist Church."[12] In fact the Mahāyāna as it emerges in the *Ratnāvalī*—a text presumably written by a strong proponent of the movement—appears above all as an object of ridicule, scorn, and abuse (*nindati, durbhāṣita,* etc.).[13] Even in the hands of one of its most clever advocates it does not appear as an independent, self-confident movement sweeping all before it as, again, Stcherbatsky's influential scenario might suggest. But rather—and as late as the second or third century—it appears as an embattled movement struggling for acceptance. It appears to have found itself in an awkward spot on several issues. Nāgārjuna, for example, wants the Mahāyāna to be "the word of the Buddha": "The benefit of others and oneself, and the goal of release, are in brief the teaching of the Buddha (*buddhaśāsana*). They are at the heart of the six perfections. Therefore this is the word of the Buddha" (*te ṣaṭpāramitāgarbhās / tasmād bauddham idaṃ vacaḥ* / IV.82). [8] But a few verses later he is forced to admit that "the goal of being established in the practice which leads to awakening is not declared in the *sūtra*" (*bodhicaryāpratiṣṭhārthaṃ na sūtre bhāṣitaṃ vacaḥ* / IV.93).

To judge again by Nāgārjuna's "defense," the Mahāyāna had troubles not just in regard to its authenticity or not just in regard to its doctrine of emptiness. Its concep-

tion of the Buddha—what, significantly, Nāgārjuna several times calls its *Buddha-māhātmya*—also appears to have been far from having carried the day in the second or third century. At least Nāgārjuna was still arguing for its acceptance: "From the inconceivability of his merit, like the sky, the Jina is declared to have inconceivable good qualities. As a consequence the conception of the Buddha (*buddhamāhātmya*) in the Mahāyāna must be accepted!" (IV.84). But immediately following this verse asserting that the Mahāyāna conception of the Buddha must be accepted comes another that seems to tacitly admit that it was not: "Even in morality alone he [the Buddha] was beyond the range of even Śāriputra. Why then is the conception of the Buddha as inconceivable not accepted?" (*yasmāt tad buddhamāhātmyam acintyaṃ kim na mṛṣyate* / IV.85).

The tacit admission here of the rejection of the Mahāyāna is perhaps the one unifying theme of the entire discussion in Chapter IV of the *Ratnāvalī*, and although Nāgārjuna—or whoever wrote the text—does occasionally muster arguments in response to the perceived rejection, the response is most commonly characterized not by the skill of the dialectician, but rather by the heavy-handed rhetoric typical of marginalized sectarian preachers. Typically the Mahāyāna is extolled without argument, and then some very unkind things are said about those who are not convinced. Verse 79 is a good example of such rhetoric: "Because of its extreme generosity and profound depth the Mahāyāna is now (*adya*) ridiculed by the low-spirited and unprepared. From stupidity (it is ridiculed) by those hostile to both themselves and others" (IV.79).

Again this sort of rhetoric runs like a refrain throughout the discussion. Not only are those who ridicule the Mahāyāna stupid and ill prepared, but they [9] are also "deluded" and "hostile" (vs. 67); they have no understanding of good qualities or actually despise them (vss. 68, 69); they have no sense (vs. 78); and they are "ignorant and blind" (vs. 83). This sort of rhetoric and name calling is generally not associated with a strong, self-assured, established movement with broad support and wide acceptance. But we need not rely on general considerations of this kind to conclude that the Mahāyāna was in the second or third century a long way from having achieved any significant acceptance in Nāgārjuna's India. Our author—again, himself a proponent of the system or movement he is characterizing—repeatedly and explicitly declares that there is "opposition," "aversion," or "repugnance" (*pratigha*) to the Mahāyāna (vs. 97); it is the object of "ridicule" or "scorn" (vss. 67, 68, 69, 78, 79); it is despised (vss. 70, 89), verbally abused (vs. 80), not tolerated (vs. 85), and not accepted (vss. 85, 87). Its position would seem to be clear.

In addition to those we have already seen, Nāgārjuna makes use of other rhetorical devices from the tool chest of the embattled sectarian preacher. One who despises the Mahāyāna is warned that he "is thereby destroyed" (vs. 70), while one who has faith in the Mahāyāna (*mahāyānaprasādena*) and who practices it is promised the

eventual attainment of awakening (*anuttarā bodhiḥ*), and—in the meantime—"all comforts or happiness" (*sarvasaukhya*, vs. 98). There are as well—as there are in Mahāyāna *sūtra* literature—several exhortations to have faith in the Mahāyāna (e.g., *prasādaś cādhikaḥ kāryaḥ*, vs. 97). But the real weakness of the position of the Mahāyāna is perhaps most strikingly evident in a series of verses where our author gives up any attempt to argue for the *acceptance* of the Mahāyāna, and—playing off the old Buddhist ideal of *upekṣā*—argues instead that it should at least be *tolerated*:

> Since it is indeed not easy to understand what is declared with intention by the Tathāgata, when one vehicle and three vehicles are declared, one should be careful by remaining impartial (*ātmā rakṣya upekṣayā* /).
>
> There is indeed no demerit through remaining impartial (*upekṣayā hi nāpuṇyaṃ*). But from despising there is evil—how could that be good? As a consequence, for those who value themselves despising the Mahāyāna is inappropriate. (vss. 88–89)

This has the smell of a retreat. There are, of course, some problems here. Sectarian rhetoric—especially in isolation—is difficult to assess. What the observer sees as rhetoric the insider may see as self-evident and hold as [10] conviction. But the fact probably remains that calling those who do not share your conviction "stupid" occurs largely in the face of a rejection that itself threatens that conviction and reflects a certain desperation. More self-confident movements are by definition more assured of their means of persuasion and do not commonly indulge in this sort of thing.

Sociologists, however, who have studied sectarian groups in a variety of contexts have shown that this sort of characterization is typical of small, embattled groups on the fringes or margins of dominant, established parent groups.[14] Moreover, the kind of rhetoric we find in the *Ratnāvalī* is by no means unique—Mahāyāna literature is saturated with it. There those who do not accept the Mahāyāna are said to be not only "stupid," but also defective, of bad karma and evil, or even possessed by Māra.[15] Further, while we cannot be sure that those who did not accept the Mahāyāna were "stupid," we can be reasonably sure that such people existed at the time of our author—and in large numbers. Even the logic of the rhetoric would suggest that it would be self-defeating—if not itself "stupid"—for a proponent of a movement to repeatedly claim that that movement was an object of ridicule if it were not true; it would get him nowhere and in fact would undercut any argument he might make on that basis. The statements in the *Ratnāvalī,* indeed, presuppose that it was widely known by its intended audience—almost certainly literate and learned monks and perhaps the king to whom it was supposedly addressed—that the Mahāyāna was not taken seriously and was in general an object of scorn. Again, the force of our author's arguments would seem to rest on this being fact.

There is also the problem of our author. Scholarly consensus, as we have noted, ascribes the *Ratnāvalī* to the Nāgārjuna who also authored the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikās* and places this Nāgārjuna in the second or third century C.E. This—again as we have noted—would also place the Mahāyāna described in the *Ratnāvalī* in the second or third century and would mean that this Mahāyāna had still not achieved any significant acceptance at least one and probably two centuries after it was supposed [11] to have appeared and was still an object of ridicule and scorn among learned and literate monks. But scholarly consensus, of course, has often had to be revised, and in this case too that may occur. However, it seems very, very unlikely that should the *Ratnāvalī* be shown not to be by the author of the *Kārikās*, it will then be shown to have been composed by an author that preceded him. In other words, while it is not impossible that the *Ratnāvalī* might eventually be shown not to belong to the second or third century, it is extremely unlikely that it will ever be assigned to a period earlier than that. Any revision of its chronological position will almost certainly be upward, and that in turn means that the Mahāyāna it is describing too will have to be placed even after the third century.[16]

The contrast between the situation of the Mahāyāna and the Perfection of Wisdom "school" in China in the third century which Professor Zürcher has reconstructed, and the situation of the Mahāyāna in third-century India, which is inadvertently described in the *Ratnāvalī*, could hardly be greater. In China in the third century the Mahāyāna was of "paramount importance," well [12] situated among the ecclesiastical and social elite, well on its way—if not already—mainstream. In India it is, during the same period, embattled, ridiculed, scorned by learned monks and the social elite—bear in mind that the *Ratnāvalī* was supposed to have been addressed to a king—and at best marginal. These are historical situations that surely are not significantly parallel; they are almost the inverse of one another. Moreover, evidence that would suggest that the *Ratnāvalī* presents something like an accurate picture of the historical situation of the early Mahāyāna in India has been around for a long time, but it has been all but assiduously avoided. One reason for this—indeed one ironical obstacle to admitting this material into the discussion—has probably been the uncomfortable implications that it carries for two concerned groups. Recognition of the possibility, if not the fact, that developments in China were independent of, and unrelated to, developments in India—the motherland and supposed source of all that is authoritative and Buddhistically good—would have created problems for any Chinese—and by extension Japanese—Buddhist tradition: it would have deprived them of "historical" sanction. But a recognition that what was important in China may not have been important in India, and vice versa, would also have rendered problematic the enormous labors of modern scholars who worked primarily on Chinese sources: they would have to ask some uncomfortable questions about the significance of the documents they were mining. It is here, I think, that

sets of complicated, textured, and entangled interests regarding Chinese sources may have been most mischievous and most misleading in our attempts to understand the historical situation of the early Mahāyāna in India. What appears to be a reluctance, or full failure, to consider even the possibility that what in India was marginal was in China mainstream has, moreover, not just affected our understanding of the early Mahāyāna in India, but also has very likely obscured our understanding of Buddhism in India throughout what I would call the Middle Period, the period from the beginning of the Common Era to the fifth/sixth century.

It seems fairly certain that in China from the third century on the Mahāyāna became not less but more and more mainstream. The Mahāyāna in India, however, appears to have continued very much on the margins. Again, in striking contrast to its situation in China, the Mahāyāna in India was—until the fifth century—institutionally and publicly all but invisible. Here, of course, I can only quickly summarize several large bodies of data.

Throughout the second, third, and fourth centuries there are in India scores of references in inscriptions to the mainstream monastic orders as recipients of [13] gifts of land and monasteries; endowments of money, slaves, and villages; and deposits of relics and images, but not a single reference to gifts or patronage extended to an explicitly named Mahāyāna or Mahāyāna group until the end of the fifth and beginning of the sixth centuries.[17] Though there are hundreds of inscriptions from the second to the fifth century that record the intentions, goals, and aspirations of a wide range of monastic and lay donors, there is not a single reference—with one partial exception—to what Louis de La Vallée Poussin has flagged as the goal that defines, above all else, the Mahāyāna: "The Mahāyāna, by definition is," he says, "the aspiration to the title of Buddha"; the early Mahāyāna, he again says, was "distinguished from the Small Vehicle in this only, or in this above all, that it invited pious men to make the resolution to become Buddhas."[18] But apart from the single partial exception that proves the rule, this *idea* is nowhere found in any of the hundreds of donative inscriptions until the fifth century. The one exception—an isolated second- or third-century inscription from Mathurā—is itself, moreover, not fully Mahāyāna, but only groping toward it. [There might now also be a second similar partial exception.][19] Apart, again, from this single, isolated, and partial exception, it is clear that the [14] single most important and characteristically Mahāyāna *idea* had no visible impact on Indian donors, whether monk—and a very large number of the donors were monks—or goldsmith or merchant or king until the fifth century.

Exactly the same pattern holds in regard to what we see in art historical sources and, again with one exception, so too does what Étienne Lamotte said a long time ago: "The school of Gandhāra [art] still expresses only Hīnayānistic conceptions of the Buddhist pantheon. . . . The same has been said for Mathurā and would hold equally for Amarāvatī and Nāgārjunakoṇḍa. One has not found any trace there of

the great saviours of the Mahāyāna, Avalokiteśvara and Mañjuśrī; they do not appear in the repertoire of these schools" until after the fifth century.[20] The one exception here is the same exception referred to above: the proto-Mahāyāna inscription from second- or third-century Mathurā occurs on the base of what was once an image of Amitābha. Apart from it and although there have been attempts to identify a small number of other representations as Mahāyāna figures, there is not a single *certain* or *incontestable* representation anywhere in India of any of the characteristic Mahāyāna Buddhas or Bodhisattvas until the fifth century, and—like references to the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā*—they probably do not become really common until the Pāla Period, although even then their numbers and significance may have been exaggerated.[21]

What emerges from a study of the inscriptional and art historical sources has, finally, been confirmed by the recent careful rereading of Fa-hsien by Professor André Bareau. Professor Bareau has noted that "with very rare exceptions, Fa-hsien noted in India almost no specifically Mahāyānist elements"; that "if we are to accept his account, the personages to whom the devotions of Indian Buddhists were addressed at the beginning of the fifth [15] century were almost exclusively Buddhas known from the early canonical texts"; and that "throughout the account of Fa-hsien's travels Indian Buddhism at the beginning of the fifth century appears to us, therefore, as exclusively Hīnayānist."[22]

The cumulative weight of the different evidences is heavy and makes it clear that regardless of what was occurring in China and although Mahāyāna *sūtras* were being written at the time, it is virtually impossible to characterize Indian Buddhism in the Middle Period—the period from the first to the fifth century—as in any meaningful sense Mahāyāna. In India it appears more and more certain that the Mahāyāna was not institutionally, culturally, or art historically significant until after the fifth century, and not until then did Mahāyāna doctrine have any significant visible impact on the intentions of Buddhist donors.

We do not, of course, know for certain where the Mahāyāna was in the meantime. We do know where it first became visible, and texts tell us where it might have been. Here too I can only summarize a large body of data. It is ironic—and perhaps significant—that what may have been one of the earliest inscriptional references to Mahāyāna teachers (*ācāryas*) in India proper may have been intentionally erased. The inscription in question comes from the Salt Range in the Punjab and dates to the fifth or sixth century. It contains a version of the classical Mahāyāna donative formula, which declares that the anticipated merit is "for the attainment of the unexcelled knowledge [i.e., Buddhahood] by all living beings" and records the donation of a monastery. The name of the intended recipients has been reconstructed as "the Mahīśāsaka Teachers," but this name has been written over an intentional erasure, and since the formula nowhere else occurs in association with a named mainstream monastic order but always with the Mahāyāna, it is likely that

the record originally read not Mahīśāsaka, but Mahāyāna.[23] The two earliest certain references in India proper to the Mahāyāna by name, however, though they both date to the same period—the late fifth/early sixth [16] century—come all the way from the other side of India. The first of these comes from Guṇaighar in Bengal and records the donation of several parcels of land "to the Community of Monks who are followers of the Mahāyāna and irreversible."[24] The second comes from Jayarāmpur in Orissa and records the gift of a village "to the Mahāyāna Community of Monks."[25] Both these records also refer to Avalokiteśvara by name and are among the very earliest inscriptions to do so.[26] There is yet another record from this same period, or perhaps slightly later, from Nepal that records an endowment presented to "the Community of Noble Nuns who practice the Mahāyāna from the four directions."[27] And although it does not actually contain the name Mahāyāna, there is still another record that probably comes from the fifth century from Devnīmorī in Gujarat, near the border with Rajasthan; it appears to refer to the religious activities and donations of two Mahāyāna monks. The monks are called *Śākyabhikṣus,* but it is virtually certain that *Śākyabhikṣu* is the title monks who used the Mahāyāna donative formula preferred to use to describe themselves, and already at Guṇaighar *mahāyānika* qualifies and occurs in compound with *Śākyabhikṣu.*[28]

Anyone with a knowledge of Indian geography will have already realized that all these places have one thing in common: they are, and more certainly [17] were then, on both the geographic and cultural periphery. More than that, all these sites were in areas that can probably be fairly characterized in the same way as Imam has characterized Bengal at that time: Bengal, he says, was then "a backwater and hopelessly provincial."[29] Most, if not all of these areas, were at the time in the process of being brought into productive economic use and colonized, had little or no previous politically organized presence, and almost certainly had little or no prior Buddhist history. They appear to have been very much on the "frontier." This, then, is one of two kinds of places in India in which the Mahāyāna in the fifth/sixth century first and finally emerged into public, institutional view—the cultural fringe. And, as if to prove the whole point here, it now turns out that what may be by far the earliest reference to the Mahāyāna by name in an inscription in an Indian language occurs at the most extreme possible limits of any such fringe, at Endere, well on its way to China, and in a mixed "Indian" and Chinese context.[30]

But in addition to peripheral, "frontier" areas with little or no previous Buddhist history, the Mahāyāna also begins to appear at another kind of site in the fifth/sixth century. Sites of this second sort had, to be sure, a prior Buddhist history but appear to have fallen on hard times and in some cases may actually have been abandoned and only later reoccupied by the Mahāyāna. What may be another of the earliest occurrences of the name Mahāyāna in inscriptions is found, for example, at Ajaṇṭā. The inscription in question *may* record the gift of an individual called both

a *Śākyabhikṣu* and a follower of the Mahāyāna, but there are, in any case, more than a dozen other records of gifts by *Śākyabhikṣus* at the site dating to the same period.[31] Records of this sort are, however, associated with the late [18] "intrusive" images that have been seen as violating and disturbing earlier well-planned and organized decorative schemes, and the arbitrary, if not chaotic, placement of these images has been taken to indicate that order and control at the site were breaking down. It has been suggested that all of the references to *Śākyabhikṣus* seem to occur at the time when the site was rapidly declining or, perhaps, even after it had otherwise been abandoned.[32] Similar evidence for a late Mahāyāna occupation or reoccupation after a period of what Deshpande calls "fairly long desertion" occurs in fact at a significant number of the Western caves.[33] Rosenfield too has noted the same pattern at Sārnāth, and it seems to hold for Kuśinagarī as well. At these two traditionally important sites the first occurrences of the Mahāyāna ideal come—as they do in the Western caves—in the fifth/sixth century and occur in connection with the renovation of what were probably inactive and run-down, if not entirely derelict, Buddhist complexes.[34]

It would appear, then, that when the Mahāyāna ideal was finally expressed in donative records and when the Mahāyāna finally emerged in India in the fifth/sixth century as a clearly identifiable named group having its [19] own monasteries, this seems to have occurred either in peripheral, marginal areas with little or no previous Buddhist presence or at established Buddhist sites that were declining, if not already abandoned, and at which the old order had broken down. The decline of the old orders is in fact confirmed by yet another parallel: the appearance of the Mahāyāna and *Śākyabhikṣus* in Indian inscriptions coincides all but exactly with the virtual disappearance of inscriptional references to the old monastic orders.[35]

Where the Mahāyāna was before the fifth/sixth century—where, in other words, the individuals who composed what we call Mahāyāna *sūtras* were socially and institutionally located—can only be inferred from the *sūtra* literature that has come down to us, and inference is not always a sure bet. But even the literature seems to suggest that the Mahāyāna may have first emerged on the margins because that was where, in India, it had always been. The literature seems, in fact, to suggest two basic marginal locations for the early Mahāyāna in India, and here once again I can only very crudely summarize a large body of rich data.

The rhetoric of the *Ratnāvalī* already suggests that the early Mahāyāna in India was a small, isolated, embattled minority group struggling for recognition within larger dominant groups. The rhetoric of Mahāyāna *sūtras*—and there is a very great deal of it—strongly extends that impression. The *Aṣṭasāhasrikā*, for example—and I must here limit myself to examples from it—explicitly admits the minority position of its version of the Mahāyāna: "in this world of living beings," it says, "few are the bodhisattvas who have entered on this path of Perfect Wisdom"; "far greater

numbers of bodhisattvas do turn away from unexcelled, correct and complete awakening." "There will be many, a great many bodhisattvas in the North," the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā* says, "but there will be only a few among them who will listen to this deep Perfection of Wisdom, copy it, take it up, and preserve it." In the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā* [20] Śakra is made to say, "How can it be that those men of India . . . do not know that the Blessed One has taught that the cult of the Perfection of Wisdom is greatly profitable. . . . But they do not know this! They are not aware of this! They have no faith in it!" The text also sometimes makes more explicit who it is that it is struggling with: "Just here there will be deluded men, persons who have left the world for the well-taught Dharma-Vinaya, who will decide to defame, to reject, to oppose this deep Perfection of Wisdom."[36] The opponents of the Perfection of Wisdom are, then, monks who have entered "the well-taught Dharma-Vinaya," monks, presumably, of the established monastic orders, among which the Mahāyāna apparently wants desperately to gain a foothold. This is perhaps most graphically expressed in the numerous passages in which Māra tries to tempt individuals away from the Perfection of Wisdom; when he does so, he frequently comes "in the guise of a monk."[37]

To judge, then, by at least one strand that runs through early Mahāyāna *sūtra* literature, at least one strand of the early Mahāyāna in India was institutionally located within the larger, dominant, established monastic orders as a marginal element struggling for recognition and acceptance. But another location—even more marginal—is suggested as well by another strand found in Mahāyāna *sūtra* literature.

Although until recently rarely recognized, there is a strong strand of radical asceticism in early Mahāyāna *sūtra* literature. This strand involves both the strident criticism of what are presented as the "abuses" associated with sedentary, permanently housed, and institutionalized monasticism and an equally vociferous espousal of the forest life. The most violent expression of the criticism of the "abuses" of sedentary monasticism is found, perhaps, in the *Rāṣṭrapālaparipṛcchā*. The *Rāṣṭrapālaparipṛcchā*—like the *Kāśyapaparivarta*, the *Ratnarāśi-sūtra*, the *Maitreyasiṃhanāda-sūtra*, and similar texts—is constantly critical [21] of monks who are "intent on acquisitions and honors,"[38] but it also criticizes monks for owning cattle, horses, and slaves and monks who are "intent on ploughing and practices of trade"; have wives, sons, and daughters; and assert proprietary rights to monasteries and monastic goods. Significantly a number of these practices are also referred to in the mainstream *Vinayas* and regulations are there promulgated to deal with them, but most are never subject to any specific criticism and many in fact are explicitly or implicitly condoned or even required.[39]

The sort of criticism found in the *Rāṣṭrapālaparipṛcchā* and such other texts is, however, almost always joined with calls to return to "the forest" and to radical [22] ascetic practices. It is clear that by the time of the final composition of the mainstream *Vinayas* the *dhutaguṇas* or ascetic practices were—for the compilers—all but

a dead letter, at best what Carrithers calls "emblematic."[40] It is, however, equally clear that some strands of early Mahāyāna *sūtra* literature were attempting to reinvent, revitalize, or resurrect these extreme ascetic practices. Such attempts are clearly visible in texts like the *Rāṣṭrapālaparipṛcchā,* the *Maitreyasiṃhanāda-sūtra,* the *Ratnarāśi-sūtra,* and even in a text like the *Samādhirāja-sūtra.* Moreover, almost an entire chapter in the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā* is taken up with what appears to have been a serious debate and dispute concerning the centrality of the *dhutaguṇas* in the early Mahāyāna, with the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā* itself apparently trying to soften the current, if not established, position.[41]

But in addition to the revalorization of the *dhutaguṇas* in some texts, there are in these same texts straightforward exhortations to return to the forest. Striking in this regard are again the *Rāṣṭrapālaparipṛcchā* and the *Kāśyapaparivarta*. Both texts constantly refer to seeking physical separation or seclusion, to "delighting in living in the forest," to "living zealously in the forest uninterested in all worldly diversions,"[42] to living alone "like a rhinoceros, never forsaking forest dwelling," "living in an empty place" or "in mountains and ravines," etc.[43] Both the *Rāṣṭrapālaparipṛcchā* and the *Maitreyasiṃhanāda-sūtra* say that all former Buddhas "abided in the domain of the forest" and exhort their hearers to imitate them; in fact both imply that it was through abiding in the forest that the Buddhas achieved enlightenment.[44] The *Samādhirāja-sūtra*—like the *Rāṣṭrapālaparipṛcchā*—returns to the old ideal of living alone "like a rhinoceros" and says there never was, nor will be, nor is now a Buddha who, when residing in a house, achieved enlightenment and adds, "one should dwell in the forest seeking seclusion."[45] The *Ugraparipṛcchā* says, "a bodhisattva who has gone [23] forth, having understood that 'dwelling in the forest was ordered by the Buddha,' should live in the forest."[46]

Such exhortations to live in the forest—though, again, until recently largely overlooked[47]—appear to be very common in a surprisingly large number of early Mahāyāna *sūtras.* Such exhortations are, for example, characteristic of most of the texts now found in the *Ratnakūṭa,* and it has long been recognized that many of these texts are very early. For the moment, though, several points need to be noted here. First, this strong strand of radical asceticism may be yet another element in early Mahāyāna literature that has not been clearly recognized, or given its due, precisely because it is so much at odds with Chinese understandings of the Mahāyāna and so much opposed to the directions of the developments that early Mahāyāna underwent in China. Second, if this radical asceticism and the exhortations to forest life found in the literature were actually implemented, then we might have found a second location for the early Mahāyāna in India. If some early Mahāyāna groups were marginalized, embattled segments still institutionally embedded in the dominant mainstream monastic orders, other Mahāyāna groups may have been marginal in yet another way: they may have been small, isolated groups living in the forest at odds

with, and not necessarily welcomed by, the mainstream monastic orders, having limited access to both patronage and established Buddhist monasteries and sacred sites.[48] Such a location would account too for the absence of inscriptional records of gifts and support for the Mahāyāna at established Buddhist sites—the only kinds of sites known and so far studied—from the first to the fifth century and account too for the attempted redefinition of Buddhist sacred sites found in so many Mahāyāna *sūtras*.[49] [24]

All of our evidence, then—the *Ratnāvalī*, the absence of Mahāyāna ideas and references to the Mahāyāna in inscriptional records, the absence of clear Mahāyāna elements in Buddhist art, the testimony of Fa-hsien, the location of the first identifiable Mahāyāna monasteries and the first explicit references to the Mahāyāna as a distinct group, the rhetoric characteristic of embattled minority groups found in Mahāyāna *sūtra* literature, the strident criticism of some of the bureaucratic values and practices of institutionalized monasticism in these same texts, and their continuous exhortations to live and locate in the forest—all this would seem to suggest that however mainstream the early Mahāyāna was in China, it was in India constituted of a number of differentially marginalized minority groups.

If these suggestions are even approximately correct, it would appear that we may have badly misunderstood the nature and character of the early Mahāyāna in India; we may, as well, have completely overlooked the dominant form of Indian Buddhism in the Middle Period, may, ironically, have completely missed the mainstream and radically undervalued the religious and social significance of the established monasticism of what used to be called the Hīnayāna monastic orders. These orders, it is beginning to appear, may well have developed as very successful institutions, well suited—through a series of interlocking and mutual religious, economic, and social obligations—to the needs of their local communities.[50] Their success, in fact, may have created a situation where there was no felt need for what the Mahāyāna thought it had to offer. The mainstream monk, in short, may have been completely misunderstood because in large part he has been too often viewed through the lens of Mahāyāna polemic.

If, again, these suggestions are even approximately correct, we may, as well, have uncovered a major motive for the movement of the Mahāyāna outside India. Established groups securely set in their social environment have little motive to move. It is the marginalized, those having little or limited access to economic resources, social prestige, and political power, that have strong incentives to leave—the unsuccessful. Such considerations may account for the migration of the Mahāyāna; they may account as well for the migration of the Theravāda: it may be that neither did very well at home. The final irony is that we might know most about those Buddhist groups that—from an Indian point of view—were the least significant and the least successful. That at least is a distinct possibility.

Notes

This paper has had already a rather long life. A first version was presented at a conference at Hsi Lai University in Los Angeles in 1993. Yet another version was presented as a public lecture at Otani University in Kyoto in 1997. I would here especially like to thank the authorities of Otani for their invitation, which allowed me to spend several weeks over a period of two years at their university, and very especially I would like to warmly thank Professor Nobuchiyo Odani, who made my stays productive, pleasant, and fun.

1. See S. Roy, "Indian Archaeology from Jones to Marshall (1784–1902)," *AI* 9 (1953) 4–28, esp. 10ff; A. Imam, *Sir Alexander Cunningham and the Beginnings of Indian Archaeology* (Dacca: 1966) esp. 51–52; D. K. Chakrabarti, *A History of Indian Archeology. From the Beginning to 1947* (New Delhi: 1988) 48–119. That this dependence on Chinese sources has also resulted in some serious distortions is clear enough in general terms but badly needs to be carefully studied.

2. See Schopen, *BSBM*, 56–71.

3. See most recently G. Fussman, "La place des *Sukhāvatī-vyūha* dans le bouddhisme indien," *JA* (1999) 523–586.

4. E. Zürcher, *The Buddhist Conquest of China. The Spread and Adaptation of Buddhism in Early Medieval China* (Leiden: 1959) 33–36, 50, 53–54, 61 (where Zürcher adds that "early Chinese Buddhist scholars," however, considered the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā* an "extract" or a "condensed version made from a more comprehensive original text"), 65.

5. See M. Bloomfield, "On False Ascetics and Nuns in Hindu Fiction," *JAOS* 44 (1924) 202–442; C. V. Kher, "Buddhism and the Non-Philosophical Brahmanical Literature," in *Studies in Pali and Buddhism. A Memorial Volume in Honor of Bhikku Jagdish Kashyap*, ed. A. K. Narain (Delhi: 1979) 207–216; L. Siegel, *Laughing Matters. Comic Tradition in India* (Chicago/London: 1987) 209–225.

6. See, for example, L. Sander, "The Earliest Manuscripts from Central Asia and the Sarvāstivāda Mission," in *Corolla Iranica. Papers in Honour of Prof. Dr. David Neil Mackenzie on the Occasion of His 65th Birthday*, ed. R. E. Emmerick and D. Weber (Frankfurt am Main: 1991) 133–150, esp. 136. [See now, for small fragments of a Kuṣān manuscript of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā* that have recently been identified, L. Sander, "Fragments of an Aṣṭasāhasrikā manuscript from the Kuṣāṇa period," in *Manuscripts in the Schøyen Collection. I. Buddhist Manuscripts*, ed. J. Braarvig (Oslo: 2000) Vol. I, 1–51; L. Sander, "New Fragments of the Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā of the Kuṣāṇa Period," in *Manuscripts in the Schøyen Collection. III. Buddhist Manuscripts*, ed. J. Braarvig (Oslo: 2002) Vol. II, 37–49.] The *Vajracchedikā* is something of an exception to this pattern.

7. V. V. Mirashi, *Inscriptions of the Kalachuri-Chedi Era* (CII 4) (Ootacamund: 1955) 275–278.

8. N. G. Majumdar, "Nalanda Inscription of Vipulasrimitra," *EI* 21 (1931–32) 97–101. Majumdar has not recognized what appears in the inscription to be a reference to some kind of revolving bookcase or a mechanical device something like, perhaps, a larger stationary Tibetan "prayer-wheel" [see Ch. XIII below]. There is also reference to the *Prajñāpāramitā* in a Pāla record assigned to the ninth century: A. C. Sastri, "Jagajjivanpur Copper-

Plate of Mahendrapāla," *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute* 72/73 (1993) 205–214, esp. 212, line 18.

9. For a sampling of such colophons see R. D. Banerji, *The Palas of Bengal* (Memoirs of the Asiatic Society of Bengal 5.3) (Calcutta: 1915) 25, 34–35, 53, 70, 71, R. Sāṅkṛityāyana, "Sanskrit Palm-Leaf Mss. In Tibet," *Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society* 21 (1935) 27 (no. 1, n. 1); 32 (no. 59, n. 8); 43 (no. 184, n. 1); etc.

10. Banerji, *The Palas of Bengal*, 71.

11. On the question of authenticity, see D. S. Ruegg, *The Literature of the Madhyamaka School of Philosophy in India* (A History of Indian Literature VII.1) (Wiesbaden: 1981) 23ff; C. Lindtner, *Nagarjuniana. Studies in the Writings and Philosophy of Nāgārjuna* (Copenhagen: 1982) 163–169; T. Vetter, "On the Authenticity of the Ratnāvalī," *AS/EA* 46.1 (1992) 492–506. On the life of Nāgārjuna, see most recently I. Mabbett, "The Problem of the Historical Nāgārjuna Revisted," *JAOS* 118 (1998) 332–346, which indicates, if nothing else, how little progress has been made.

12. T. Stcherbatsky, *The Conception of Buddhist Nirvāṇa* (Leningrad: 1927) 36. This "vision" of the Mahāyāna was, of course, very common for a very long time.

13. All citations from and references to the *Ratnāvalī* refer to M. Hahn, *Nāgārjuna's Ratnāvalī* (Indica et Tibetica I) (Bonn: 1982). Since I refer only to Ch. IV, I frequently give only the verse numbers.

14. For the sake of convenience of reference, see S. Kent, "A Sectarian Interpretation of the Rise of the Mahāyāna," *Religion* 12 (1982) 311–332. Although Kent's knowledge of things Buddhist is thin and uneven and although significant parts of what he says will not stand up to great scrutiny, still his paper is a remarkable example of the kinds of things that an "outsider"—he describes his specialty as the social sciences and his area of interest as the early English Quakers—can see when he looks at otherwise unfamiliar materials, things that "insiders" often do not even notice.

15. See below, p. 15.

16. The defensive posture and shrill "sectarian" rhetoric do not, in any case, stop with the *Ratnāvalī*; see R. M. Davidson, "Sāramati's *Entering into the Great Vehicle*," in *Buddhism in Practice*, ed. D. S. Lopez Jr. (Princeton: 1995) 402–411. Davidson describes this text as "a primer from the late fourth or very early fifth century C.E." Here, still, people are said to "slander," "denigrate," and "deprecate" the Mahāyāna, to "maintain the Great Vehicle to be the word of Māra," and to "believe that to call the Great Vehicle the word of the Buddha is like a worm in the body of the Teacher that still feeds on his corpse." In an equally interesting paper J. I. Cabezón noted that "Indeed, for more than six hundred years we find Mahāyāna scholars engaged in what they considered to be a refutation of the arguments of their opponents" in regard to the authenticity of the Mahāyāna *sūtras*. Cabezón refers to Nāgārjuna in the second century, Vasubandhu in the fourth, Bhāvaviveka in the sixth, and Śāntideva in the eighth ("Vasubandhu's *Vyākhyāyukti* on the Authenticity of the Mahāyāna *Sūtras*," in *Texts in Context. Traditional Hermeneutics in South Asia*, ed. J. R. Timm (Albany: 1992) 221–243, esp. 223, 224). Cabezón also makes a good argument throughout the paper for his position that Vasubandhu repudiates "historical . . . criteria as determinants of authenticity," and that "from Vasubandhu's viewpoint, neither history nor philology can serve as the basis for the

criterion of authenticity or canonicity." He concludes that "the Mahāyāna scholastic rejection of history . . . in favor of a doctrinal or philosophical principle . . . as the ultimate criterion of authenticity is far from being an instance of hermeneutical naiveté. It is, in fact, the result of considerable critical reflection." To this I would only add that "the Mahāyāna scholastic rejection of history" is perhaps, at least in part, a function of the Mahāyāna's actual historical situation: it rejected "history" because it was not winning, and probably could not win, the historical argument.

17. For an approximate—but only that—idea of the number and sorts of inscriptions that record donations to the named mainstream monastic orders between the beginning of the Common Era and the fifth century see Lamotte, *Histoire du bouddhisme indien*, 578–581, and M. Shizutani, *Indo bukkyō himei mokuroku* (Kyoto: 1979); both, however, are badly in need of revision. Many new inscriptions—especially referring to the Dharmaguptaka and Sarvāstivādins—have since been published (see, for example, R. Salomon, *Ancient Buddhist Scrolls from Gandhāra. The British Library Kharoṣṭhī Fragments* [Seattle: 1999] 175–178, 183–247; G. Fussman, "Documents épigraphiques kouchans (V). Buddha et bodhisattva dans l'art de Mathura: Deux bodhisattvas inscrits de l'an 4 et l'an 8," *BEFEO* 77 [1988] 6–7), and some of those cited by Lamotte do not refer to "schools" or "orders" at all (see, for example, Schopen, *BSBM*, 167ff; Schopen, "The Lay Ownership of Monasteries and the Role of the Monk in Mūlasarvāstivādin Monasticism," *JIABS* 19.1 [1996] 93 n. 31). [*BMBM*, 250 n. 31.]

18. L. de La Vallée Poussin: *Vijñaptimātratāsiddhi. La Siddhi de Hiuan-Tsang* (Paris: 1929) t. II, 767, and "Opinions sur les relations des deux Véhicules au point de vue du Vinaya," *Académie royale de Belgique. Bulletin de la classe des lettres et des sciences morales et politiques*, 5e série, t. XVI (1930) 20–39. [See also below, p. 108.] For more recent assertions to much the same effect, see P. Williams, *Mahāyāna Buddhism. The Doctrinal Foundations* (London/New York: 1989) 25; P. Harrison, "Some Reflections on the Personality of the Buddha," *Ōtāni gakuhō* 74.4 (1995) 18, 20.

19. G. Schopen, "The Inscription on the Kuṣān Image of Amitābha and the Character of the Early Mahāyāna in India," *JIABS* 10.2 (1987) 99–134 [= Ch. VIII below]. [For what might represent a second early, nonstandardized occurrence of something like the *anuttarajñāna* formula, see Ch. VIII below, n. 15.]

20. Ét. Lamotte, "Mañjuśrī," *TP* 48 (1960) 3–4.

21. Fussman has—it seems to me—used exactly the right sort of language in recently summarizing the attempts to find Mahāyāna elements, and particularly "Pure Land" elements, in the art of Gandhāra and Mathurā, for example. He first notes in regard to the reliefs in question "que la date de ces reliefs n'étant pas déterminable à trois siècles près (IIe–Ve)," and then says: "On a quelques raisons, mais pas contraignantes, d'attribuer à ce même culte [of Amitābha] une dizaine de panneaux sculptés qu'on peut considérer, sans scandale mais sans preuve, comme représentant la Sukhāvatī. C'est bien peu par rapport aux milliers de sculptures gandhariennes conservées. C'est bien peu par rapport aux centaines de statues de culte du *buddha* Śākyamuni dit historique. . . . C'est dire combien le culte d'Amitābha est minoritaire au Gandhāra. Statistiquement, il n'y est pas mieux représenté qu'à Mathurā" ("La place des *Sukhāvatī-vyūha*," 550–551).

22. A. Bareau, "Étude du bouddhisme. 1. Aspects du bouddhisme indien décrits par

les pèlerins chinois," *Annuaire du Collège de France 1984–1985. Résumé des cours et travaux* (Paris: 1985) 649–653, esp. 649, 653.

23. G. Bühler, "The New Inscription of Toramana Shaha," *EI* 1 (1892) 238–241, esp. 240 n. 7; also in Sircar, *Select Inscriptions i*, 422–424. For the Mahāyāna donative formula, see G. Schopen, "Mahāyāna in Indian Inscriptions," *IIJ* 21 (1979) 1–19 [= Ch. VII below], and Schopen, *BSBM*, 39–41.

24. *māhāyānika(?)vaivarttika-bhikṣusaghanām parigrahe,* l. 5; also *māhāyānikaśākya-bhikṣvācāryya-śāntidevam uddiśya*, ll. 3–4 of D. C. Bhattacharyya, "A Newly Discovered Copperplate from Tippera," *IHQ* 6 (1930) 45–60; also in Sircar, *Select Inscriptions i*, 340–345.

25. *mahāyānikebhyo bhikṣusaṅghāya pratipāditaḥ*, 531, l. 17 of Sircar, *Select Inscriptions i*, 530–531; also P. R. Srinivasan, "Jayarampur Plate of Gopachandra," *EI* 39 (1972 but 1985) 141–148, esp. 147 ll. 29–30.

26. See Schopen, "The Inscription on the Kuṣān Image of Amitābha," 119, and references cited in n. 65 there [= p. 264 and n. 65 below].

27. *mahāyāna-pratipannāryya-bhikṣuṇī-saṅgha-paribhogāyākṣayanīvī*, from D. R. Regmi, *Inscriptions of Ancient and Early Medieval Nepal* (New Delhi: 1983) Vol. I, 88, no. XC; cf. T. Riccardi, "Buddhism in Ancient and Early Medieval Nepal," in *Studies in History of Buddhism,* ed. A. K. Narain (Delhi: 1980) 265–281, esp. 274, but the translation given there has gone awry and *mahāyāna-pratipanna-* has been omitted.

28. The text of the inscription is most conveniently available in Sircar, *Select Inscriptions i*, 519. Its date has been much debated and has generated a large bibliography. For what appears to me to be the most convincing evidence—the archaeological evidence—see S. Sankaranarayana, "Devnimori Buddhist Relic Casket Inscription of the Time of Rudrasena, Kathika Year 127," *Journal of the Oriental Institute of Baroda* 15 (1965/66) 66–73. For *Śākya-bhikṣu* and the Mahāyāna donative formula, see the references at the end of n. 23 above.

29. A. Imam, "Bengal in History," in *India: History and Thought. Essays in Honour of A. L. Basham*, ed. S. N. Mukherjee (Calcutta: 1982) 71–83.

30. It has been known for a long time that in one of the Niya documents an official, the *cojhbo* Ṣamasena, is described as *mahāyāna-saṃprastita* (see A. M. Boyer, E. J. Rapson, and E. Senart, *Kharoṣṭhī Inscriptions Discovered by Sir Aurel Stein in Chinese Turkestan* [Oxford: 1920] Pt. I, 140 n. 390), and R. Salomon is about to publish a fragmentary Kharoṣṭhī inscription from Endere in which the same epithet or title occurs (R. Salomon, "A Stone Inscription in Central Asian Gāndhārī from Endere [Xinjiang]," *Bulletin of the Asia Institute* 12 (2000) forthcoming.) [This has now appeared but in Vol. 13 of the *Bulletin*, pp. 1–13. So too has R. Salomon, "A Fragment of a Collection of Buddhist Legends, with a Reference to King Huviṣka as a Follower of the Mahāyāna," in *Manuscripts in the Schøyen Collection. III. Buddhist Manuscripts*, ed. J. Braarvig (Oslo: 2002) Vol. II, 255–267. Salomon assigns the fragment to "about the fourth century A.D." Both instances involve a certain amount of reconstruction; in the first it is minor, in the second less so, and the latter is correspondingly less secure.] For the early remains at Endere and in "the Shan-Shan Kingdom," see M. M. Rhie, *Early Buddhist Art of China and Central Asia* (Leiden: 1999) 323ff.

31. The reference here is to a fragmentary painted inscription in Cave 22, and the readings are far from certain. I follow the suggestions of N. P. Chakrabarti in G. Yazdani,

Ajanta, Part IV: Text (London: 1955) 112 and pl. I, but only tentatively. R. S. Cohen ("Discontented Categories: Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna in Indian Buddhist History," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 63 [1995] 1–25) has recently made a very great deal of this record but is disinclined to distinguish between a reading and a reconstruction. His *reconstruction* appears in fact to be untenable, if not altogether unconvincing, but there is in any case no evidence to support it, no photograph or other reproduction.

32. There are, of course, other ways of reading the evidence. At the very least it would seem to indicate a considerable influx of a new kind of monk at a site where new construction was no longer being undertaken. See W. M. Spink, "The End of Imagery at Ajanta," in *New Trends in Indian Art and Archaeology. S. R. Rao's 70th Birthday Felicitation Volume*, ed. B. U. Nayak and N. C. Ghosh (New Delhi: 1992) Vol. 2, 337–348; for a recent statement on his views on the chronology and development of the site, see W. M. Spink, "The Archaeology of Ajaṇṭā," *ArO* 21 (1991) 67–94. These views—especially in regard to the last phases of the site—have recently been criticized with more than a little xenophobic acrimony by K. Khandalavala, "The History and Dating of the Mahāyāna Caves at Ajanta," *Maharashtra Pathik* 2.1 (1990) 18–21; and somewhat less shrilly in Khandalavala, "Bagh and Ajanta," in *The Golden Age. Gupta Art—Empire, Province and Influence*, ed. K. Khandalavala (Bombay: 1991) 93–102.

33. M. N. Deshpande, "The Rock-Cut Caves of Pitalkhora in the Deccan," *AI* 12 (1959) 70.

34. J. M. Rosenfield, "On the Dated Carvings of Sārnāth," *ArA* 26.1 (1962) 26; J. Ph. Vogel, "Excavations at Kasiā," *ARASI for 1910–11* (Calcutta: 1914) 73–77.

35. After a reference to a Sarvāstivādin community in an early fifth-century inscription from Shorkot (J. Ph. Vogel, "Shorkot Inscription of the Year 83," *EI* 16 [1921–1922] 15–16) references to mainstream monastic orders completely disappear from Indian inscriptions for the next five or six hundred years. Not until the ninth or tenth century does such a reference again occur, and even then I know of only two examples: a ninth- or tenth-century record from Nālandā that refers again to the Sarvāstivāda (H. Sastri, *Nalanda and Its Epigraphic Material* [*MASI* 66] [Delhi: 1942] 103, pl. XI, e), and an eleventh-century record that refers to the Mūlasarvāstivāda (P. L. Gupta, *Patna Museum Catalogue of Antiquities* [Patna: 1965] 76; this, to my knowledge, is the only reference to this group anywhere in Indian inscriptions). [I had not then seen D. Mitra, "Lintels with the Figures of the Eight Great Bodhisattvas and a Tathāgata—An Iconographical Study," in *Facets of Indian Culture. Gustav Roth Felicitation Volume*, ed. C. P. Sinha (Patna: 1998) 276–300 and pls. 1–8, esp. 284–285 and pl. 3. This is an important record. It has been dated to the ninth/tenth century and contains another reference to the Mūlasarvāstivāda. Here, however, the same monk is called (in order of occurrence) a follower of the Mahāyāna, a *Śākyabhikṣu*, *and* a Mūlasarvāstivādin. He also declares in the otherwise typical Mahāyāna donative formula that—very uncharacteristically—the merit of his act was intended in part for his own benefit (*ātmanas sakalasatvarāśes cānuttarajñānāvātaya*). This, of course, is only a single, late inscription, but it—and others like it that might come to light—will undoubtedly help sort out the complex, late interrelationship between the Mahāyāna and the Mūlasarvāstivāda that is embodied, for example, in a historical figure like Guṇaprabha.]

36. For the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā* I refer to *Aṣṭasāhasrikā* (Mitra). Since Conze inserts the page numbers of Mitra in square brackets into the text of his translation, the corresponding passages can be easily found in the various reprints of Conze's rendering. I have for convenience usually followed Conze's translation or paraphrase, occasionally making minor changes, and I have used the version found in E. Conze, *The Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines & Its Verse Summary* (San Francisco: 1983). For the passages cited here, see *Aṣṭasāhasrikā* (Mitra) 429.11, 226.13, 59.6–60.20 (see also 178.4–181.2, 202.4–203.1, 209.7–210.10, 233.14–240.14, etc. for hostility toward the Perfection of Wisdom and the "limited intelligence" of those who manifest it), 183.11.

37. *Aṣṭasāhasrikā* (Mitra) 331.15, 389.3, cf. 328.12, 249.16.

38. *Rāṣṭrapālaparipṛcchā* (Finot) 16.8; 17.4, .10; 18.4, .9; 19.14; 29.13; 30.4; 31.16, .19; 33.2; 34.4, .11, .12; 35.2, .11, .13, .17; 36.3; *Kāśyapaparivarta* (Staël-Holstein) §§ 2, 5, 6, 13, 15, 22, 112, 121, 124, 125, 126, 131; *Ratnarāśi* (Silk) I.2, 67; I.4, 6–7; I.4, 13–16; II.6, 3; II.13, 1; II.21; II.22; III.1, III.11; III.15; IV.1, etc.; *Maitreyasiṃhanāda*, Tog, dkon brtsegs Ca 153a.4; 153b.6; 154b.4; 155a.7; 156a.6; 157b.7; 158a.7; 164a.3; 164b.3; etc.

39. *Rāṣṭrapālaparipṛcchā* (Finot) 28.17–36.14; a similar though much less extended passage also occurs, for example, at *Ratnarāśi* (Silk) VII.19. [See also *Kāraṇḍavyūha* (Vaidya) 307.19ff.] This passage in the *Rāṣṭrapālaparipṛcchā* has achieved a certain amount of notoriety. In the introduction to his edition of the text Finot calls it "un tableau satirique des moeurs relâchées du clergé bouddhique" and says it "reflète sans doute des faits réels." This was repeated by L. de La Vallée Poussin, "Bouddhisme. Notes et bibliographie," *Le muséon* n.s. 4 (1903) 307; by M. Winternitz, *A History of Indian Literature*, trans. S. Ketkar and H. Kohn (Calcutta: 1927) Vol. II, 331, who pointed out similar passages in the Pāli *Theragāthā*; and finally by Lamotte, "Sur la formation du Mahāyāna," *Asiatica*, 379. The latter seems to want to see in it evidence for the importance of the laity in the Mahāyāna and classifies it with a number of other unnamed Mahāyāna *sūtras* that he says "ne sont autre chose que des pamphlets anti-cléricaux, où le clergé bouddique est sévèrement pris à partie." Although passages of this sort need to be much more carefully studied, it seems very likely that Lamotte's interpretation will prove to be untenable. These passages seem to reflect the criticism of one group of monks by another group of monks, and what is being criticized could easily be called a process of laicization of the community—ironically, a figure like Vimalakīrti could easily have been the target. For some of the *vinaya* material see G. Schopen: "The Monastic Ownership of Servants or Slaves: Local and Legal Factors in the Redactional History of Two *Vinayas*," *JIABS* 17.2 (1994) 145–173, and "The Good Monk and His Money in a Buddhist Monasticism of 'The Mahāyāna Period,'" *EB* n.s. 32 (2000) 85–105 [= Chs. VII and I of *BMBM*].

40. M. Carrithers, *The Forest Monks of Sri Lanka. An Anthropological and Historical Study* (Delhi: 1983) esp. 59–66.

41. For the *Maitreyasiṃhanāda*, see G. Schopen, "The Bones of a Buddha and the Business of a Monk: Conservative Monastic Values in an Early Mahāyāna Polemical Tract," *JIP* 27 (1999) 279–324, esp. 298–301 [= Ch. III below, pp. 81–83]; see also *Ratnarāśi* (Silk) Ch. V (on *āraṇyaka*), Ch. VI (on *piṇḍapātika*), and Ch. VII (on *pāṃśukūlika*); *Samādhirāja-sūtra* (Vaidya) 168.1–169.6, 169.7–170.5, 170.5–.29; also 124.9–.20, 134.15ff.; *Aṣṭasāhasrikā* (Mitra) 386.11–395.19.

42. *Kāśyapaparivarta* (Staël-Holstein) §§ 15, 17, 19, 25; cf. 27, 142.

43. *Rāṣṭrapālaparipṛcchā* (Finot) 13.7, 16.17, 13.17, 14.5, 16.2; also 22.1, 26.1, etc.

44. *Rāṣṭrapālaparipṛcchā* (Finot) 39.3–39.4 and 45.16; for the *Maitreyasiṃhanāda*, see Schopen, "The Bones of a Buddha and the Business of a Monk," 299 [= pp. 81–82 below].

45. *Samādhirāja-sūtra* (Vaidya) 134.19, 138.3, 179.11, 25.3; see also *Ratnarāśi* (Silk) I.2, 61.

46. *Śikṣāsamuccaya* (Bendall) 199.12. [See now J. Nattier, *A Few Good Men. The Bodhisattva Path according to the Inquiry of Ugra (Ugraparipṛcchā)* (Honolulu: 2003) 289–307, esp. 306–307.]

47. See now, for example, R. A. Ray, *Buddhist Saints in India. A Study in Buddhist Values and Orientations* (New York/Oxford: 1994) esp. Ch. 8; P. Harrison, "Searching for the Origins of the Mahāyāna: What Are We Looking For?" *EB* n.s. 28 (1995) 48–69, esp. 65.

48. One might imagine—but only that—that the relationship between these Mahāyāna monks and the members of the mainstream orders in the established monasteries might well have been like the uncomfortable relationship that seems to have held between wandering "forest" monks and "Bangkok" monks at the beginning of the twentieth century; see K. Tiyavanich, *Forest Recollections. Wandering Monks in Twentieth-Century Thailand* (Honolulu: 1997); cf. J. Bunnag, *Buddhist Monk, Buddhist Laymen. A Study of Urban Monastic Organization in Central Thailand* (Cambridge: 1973) esp. Ch. 2.

49. See, for example, *Aṣṭasāhasrikā* (Mitra) 56.6ff [below pp. 29, 45–46], where there appears to be an attempt to assimilate the place where the Perfection of Wisdom is taken up, preserved, recited, etc., to the *bodhimaṇḍa* or seat of enlightenment; or the passages in the *Śūraṃgamasamādhi-sūtra*, where it is said that all the places where this text is taught, recited, or written "sont absolument identiques (*sama*, *nirviśeṣa*) à ce Siège de diament"; Ét. Lamotte, *La concentration de la marche héroïque* (Mélanges chinois et bouddhiques 13) (Bruxelles: 1965) 221.

50. On some of these elements, see Schopen: *BSBM*, 72–85; "Doing Business for the Lord: Lending on Interest and Written Loan Contracts in the Mūlasarvāstivāda-vinaya," *JAOS* 114 (1994) 472–497; "The Lay Ownership of Monasteries," 81–126; "Marking Time in Buddhist Monasteries. On Calendars, Clocks, and Some Liturgical Practices," in *Sūryacandrāya. Essays in Honour of Akira Yuyama on the Occasion of His 65th Birthday* (Indica et Tibetica 35), ed. P. Harrison and G. Schopen (Swisttal-Odendorf: 1998) 157–179 [the last three = Chs. III, VIII, and IX in *BMBM*].